

CABINET – 2 APRIL 2008

## COMMUNITY MEALS

PORTFOLIO : EMPLOYMENT,  
HEALTH AND WELL BEING

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to consider the proposal to set the New Forest District Council Community Meals (Meals on Wheels and Luncheon Clubs) price for 2008/09 at £3.00. This is an increase of 10 pence (3.5%).
- 1.2 This is also an opportunity for the Cabinet to consider the proposed review of Community Meals which has been initiated by Hampshire County Council.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Hampshire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure the provision of a meal to each person who meets the eligibility criteria under The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. All Hampshire Districts part fund the provision using powers contained in The Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983, Section 29, Schedule 9 Part 11, although there is no statutory duty for them to do so.
- 2.2 A comprehensive review of the New Forest Meals Service was concluded in 2006 in partnership with Hampshire County Council Adult services and The Women's Royal Voluntary Service. This resulted in the meals being outsourced to HC3S (Hampshire County Council's Catering Service) which in turn led to considerable savings being made.

### 3. COMMUNITY MEALS PRICE

- 3.1 Hampshire County Council set the 'County Meal Price' at £3.00 in February 2008; this is the price that The County Council recommends that all Hampshire Districts charge.

### 4. HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REVIEW OF COMMUNITY MEALS

- 4.1 Hampshire County Council has commissioned a review of The Community Meals Service across the County. A meeting was held at Appletree Court on 30 November 2007, where the review was outlined to Officers.
- 4.2 The overall aggregated cost of providing the Service for Hampshire is £1.75 million. A total of approximately 372,000 meals per year are delivered across the County, 90% of these are delivered as hot meals and the remaining 10% are frozen meals for re-heating in the homes of the service users.

- 4.3 There is currently no consistency to how the meals are commissioned or re-heated. Some Districts have outsourced all responsibility to the WRVS including the budget, others have arrangements in place with other third sector organisations and others drive a van around their District re-heating the meals whilst delivering them.
- 4.4 The current meals service works well in some localities, in others, due to a shortfall in volunteers and the rural locations covered, the service is limited and inequitable i.e. service-led not needs-led.
- 4.5 Due to the range of arrangements in place, the management data is fragmented and some service users are not known to the County Council due to the differing referral routes. A representative sample from each locality will be selected for assessment to identify the level of meals service required.
- 4.6 It is the County Council's view that the most likely outcome will be that the percentage of service users currently receiving a hot meal will decrease. They project that a substantial number will be assessed as being capable of receiving and re-heating frozen meals. This was borne out by the review conducted by NFDC as many individuals are referred to the Community Meals Service when leaving hospital but are not re-assessed so continue to receive a subsidized meal even after full recovery. However, they also believe that the overall number of hot meals may increase as currently the service is determined by the number of days the provider operates, which in some areas is only three days per week. It is hoped that a 365 day per year service could be achieved delivering hot meals six days per week.
- 4.7 The outcomes from the review will be presented to the Social Care Executive with a number of options for their consideration for a more cost effective and efficient quality Community Meals service, targeted to meet the needs of the service users. An essential key determinant for The County is affordability for Councils and service users.

## **5. OPTIONS**

- 5.1 The County has suggested that they will be considering the following options:
- a) A hot and frozen meals service covering the spectrum of needs and promoting independence and choice. The hot meal service would operate 365 days per year, 6 days per week for those meeting the required criteria and would be subsidised. Those assessed as requiring a service but being capable of re-heating a frozen meal will be offered a frozen meal. This service is likely to be cost neutral as the charge to the service user would cover the costs for the provision of frozen meals and re-assessments of existing service users should offset the additional cost of providing a six day per week hot meal service.
  - b) Provide all eligible users with a frozen meal service which may be cost neutral as outlined above.
  - c) Provide all service users with a hot meal for a limited period only (i.e. when in crisis such as hospital discharge).
  - d) Retain the status quo.

- 5.2 It is unlikely that the review will be concluded before 31 March 2009 and due to the previous work of New Forest District Council in this area, Officers have been invited to join the Steering Group to provide information based on their experience. Formal consultation will take place as part of the review.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Based on the forecast number of meals to be provided in 2008/09 (approximately 57,500), the proposed price increase would yield an additional £5,750 per year. The net cost of the Service is split 50/50 with Hampshire County Council; therefore, the additional net income to NFDC would be £2,875 for the year, which is roughly in line with inflation expectations.
- 6.2 The financial implications of The County review of Community Meals are not known at this stage but it is unlikely that the net cost of the Service will increase.

## **7. ENVIRONMENTAL, CRIME AND DISORDER AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

## **8. REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS**

- 8.1 The Employment, Health and Well Being Review Panel supports the recommendations detailed in this report.

## **9. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 9.1 The Employment, Health and Well Being Portfolio Holder supports the recommendations contained in this report.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 It is recommended that Members:
- i) Agree a meal price of £3.00 for 2008/09.
  - ii) Note the County proposal to review the Community Meals Service and offer initial comments on the options chosen by Hampshire County Council outlined in section 5 of this report.

### **For further information:**

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